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El lugar de las mujeres en la historia de la Gran Hambruna & la Diaspora irlandesa: Tres panorámicas

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TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

Título

**Women's Place in the History of the Great Famine
& the Irish Diaspora: Three Snapshots**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to analyse three contemporary Irish novels; *Angela's Ashes* (1996), *Not the Same Sky* (2013) and *Brooklyn* (2009) from a feminist approach in order to discuss female Irish Diaspora and the situation of Irish women from the Potato Famine (1845–1849) onwards. In this final year dissertation, I will explain the change and evolution in Irish women's lives during their stay in America and Australia not only to pay tribute to emigrant Irish women, but also to demonstrate the difficult situation that Irish women had to face when they left Ireland and to illustrate their feeling of 'otherness' in the place- space. I will illustrate it with passages from the novels applying it to the real historical context.

Key words:

Great Famine, Irish Diaspora, Women's lives, Place- Space, Otherness, Memory, Tribute, Contemporary Irish authors

RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta disertación es analizar tres novelas contemporáneas irlandesas; *Las cenizas de Ángela* (1996), *Not the Same Sky* (2013) y *Brooklyn* (2009) desde un punto de vista feminista con el fin de comentar la diáspora irlandesa en las mujeres y la situación de las mujeres irlandesas desde la gran hambruna irlandesa (1845-1849) en adelante. En este trabajo final, explicaré el cambio y evolución en la vida de estas mujeres durante su estancia en América y Australia no solamente para rendir tributo a las mujeres emigrantes irlandesas, sino también para demostrar la difícil situación que estas mujeres tuvieron que afrontar cuando dejaron Irlanda y para esclarecer su sentimiento de alteridad en el espacio. Estos propósitos serán expuestos a través de diferentes extractos de las novelas aplicándolos al contexto histórico de las mismas.

Palabras clave:

Gran Hambruna, Diáspora irlandesa, Las vidas de las mujeres, Lugar- Espacio, alteridad, Tributo, Autores irlandeses contemporáneos

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“So farewell to God's own country.
We are Irish and we sail upon the tide.
Gone to seek a better place,
It's the story of our race”

- THE BEAUTIFUL GAME, *God's Own Country*

1. Introduction

My purpose in this dissertation is to analyze the women's place in the history of the Irish Diaspora provoked by the Great Famine (1845-1849) and also by other historical events of the 30's and 50's in Ireland. These three situations of Irish female migration will be depicted through three examples of contemporary literature. For this purpose, the situation of the Irish women who stayed in Ireland and women who were shipped to Australia forced by the British Government plan, consisting of stopping the shortage of women in Australia at the same time that Australians got young girls to fulfill the workhouses, will be studied in Evelyn Conlon's *Not the Same Sky* (2013). It will be also seen women who went to America voluntarily as it is portrayed in the character of Eilis in Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009), as well as the role of Angela as a "courage mother" in Frank McCourt *Angela's Ashes* (1996). *Not the Same Sky* (2013) goes back in time to 1840's, a moment in which Ireland was being devastated by the Great Famine, and the British Government decided to ship more than 4,000 Irish girls to Australia to stop the shortage of female labour in Australia. *Angela's Ashes* (1996) sets in Ireland in 1930's when Irish people who had immigrated to America had to return to their places in Ireland owing to the great economic crisis that took place in America in 1930's. Most Irish people that went back to Ireland found that life in Ireland in 1930's was not economically easy. *Brooklyn* (2009) takes place in 1950's in Ireland and America. It was a moment in which women had a lot of limitations in Ireland; most of them could only aspire to get married and bring children up. So, many girls immigrated to America in order to feel free and to success in their careers in the public sphere. Thus, not only the experience of women during the Great Famine will be discussed but also their experiences in other hard times in the history of Ireland in the 30's and 50's, and how as an effect of miserable periods of time in the Irish history women had to emigrate giving rise to what is known as Irish Diaspora.

Thus, nowadays people of Irish heritage are found in different parts of the world. Even though there are already dissertations and essays dealing with Great Famine and Diaspora in Irish contemporary literature, they are mainly focused on a general view of the Irish Diaspora or on male characters as is the case of some of the sources that I will use to support my ideas. For example, Cleary & Connolly's work *The Cambridge Companion*

to *Modern Irish Culture* (2005) focuses on general aspects of migration and Diaspora. Furthermore, there are plenty of essays discussing Frank McCourt's situation in *Angela's Ashes* (1996) as Forbes' study "Performative Identity Formation in Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir*" (2007), that deals with identity in the character of Frank McCourt, which is quite normal due to the fact that the novel is a memoir of the author himself. However, the title of this literary work is very telling because it names Angela, and this is the reason why I find interesting and necessary to focus on this female character. Thus, my focus will be on how Irish women experienced not only Irish Famine but also other events in Ireland that led them to emigrate. The importance of this topic lies on the necessity to give voice to the female Irish community and its history due to the fact that this is a topic that is not enough discussed in history or any other field.

My main reason for choosing this topic is personal interest. I became interested in Irish culture and history after a short period in Ireland, but later La Universidad de La Rioja held a conference dealing with Irish Diaspora which awakened my interest in different novels that had in common the factor of female Irish emigration. As a result, I started to explore Irish literature and its adaptations to the cinema, and I realized that it was necessary to do a wider analysis of these literary works in terms of Irish Diaspora in the female figure and the situation and feelings of women who were shipped abroad and those women who stayed in Ireland. The contexts in these literary works are completely different. Although Evelyn Conlon's novel starts in present day Ireland, it goes back to 1840's, in the middle of the Irish Great Famine, and this is the period in which the story focuses. However, in Frank McCourt's memoir, the action starts in Limerick in 1930's, while in Colm Tóibín's novel we are in Belfast in 1950's.

Beside this, during my research I was not able to locate any essay treating representations of the Irish Great Famine and Diaspora in relation to these three novels at the same time. Moreover, realized that there is a huge gap in the analysis of both women who had no choice to look for a better life abroad, and women who had the choice or simply were forced to leave their country. Most studies in the field of the Great Famine and Irish Diaspora have only focused on Irish emigrants or women who left Ireland. As an example, the sources that I will use in this dissertation focus mainly on women who emigrated, but the studies do not investigate that much those women who stayed in Ireland. So, this final year dissertation seeks to remedy these problems by analyzing the situation

of both women who had the opportunity to go abroad to America or Australia in search of a better life and women who had no choice to leave Ireland or they simply did not want to abandon their country as it can be seen in Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* and Evelyn Conlon's *Not the Same Sky* respectively.

In Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, Frank narrates the experience of a woman who immigrates to America with her husband and gives birth to her children in the American continent. However, difficulties in the 1930's America force them to return to Ireland with no more choice than facing the miseries of the Catholic Ireland where they come from. However, Irish women have had different reasons to leave Ireland throughout history. As Gray (2004: 2) says in his essay about Women in the Irish Diaspora:

Central to the entire discipline of migration is the concept of Diaspora. Women have left Ireland for different reasons, such as: better opportunities, sexual liberation, career advancement and so on. They emigrated, voluntarily and involuntarily, in greater numbers than men in most decades since the mid-nineteenth century. Although primarily a response to economic necessity, Irish women's migration throughout the twentieth century was also a response to the regulation of women's sexuality and of pregnancy outside of marriage [...] Those who have researched Irish women's experiences in the United States have frequently concluded that the experience of these women was one emancipatory, one with migration representing liberation from the confines and oppression of a small, patriarchal and Catholic society.

The statement exposed above is the base of Irish women's migration. The three novels illustrate quite well migration as a huge liberation from different kinds of social oppression such as sexual oppression, religious oppression and oppression of female domestic labours.

The term Diaspora refers to the dispersion of human groups who abandon their homeland (Cohen 2005, quoted in Cleary & Connolly 2005: 109). In this dissertation, I am dealing with America and Australia as destinations and places that contribute to the Irish Diaspora, and where nowadays, we can find a huge American and Australian

population with Irish heritage. As an example, in *Brooklyn* (2009), the reader can find a lot of characters, whose heritage are Irish, living in America. As a consequence of the increasing use of the term Diaspora, different attempts have been made to the term Diaspora lately. However, it is especially interesting Cohen's study of the Diaspora to what he maintains that "there are five different categories of Diaspora: victim, labour, imperial, cultural and trade" (Cohen 2005, quoted in Cleary & Connolly 2005: 109).

The novels examined in this dissertation deal mainly with victim, labour and trade Diaspora. In Evelyn Conlon's *Not The Same Sky* (2013) these three categories can be studied because these girls are victims of the trauma of the Great Famine of 1840's- 50's. They were sent to Australia to be labourers and the British Government traded with them because they were hired and some of them were returned to the Barracks if they did not match the expectations as if they were inert items. However, the story of Irish women shipped to Australia in the 19th century is not well known. As Cleary & Connolly (2005: 118) say:

Australia is also an important destination, because while at most 5 per cent of Irish migrants in the nineteenth century went to Australia, they formed 25 per cent of the settler population in that country; since the 1950s there has continued to be a small but notable on-going movement to Australia.

Although this essay focuses on Irish women Diaspora, it is interesting to point out the general percentages of Irish migration to Australia due to the fact that this destination seems to be very ignored by studies on diasporic Ireland.

In the analysis of these novels, it will be mainly seen that the characters face mainly labour migration; forced migration to Australia, but voluntary migration to America. Through the novels, the reader can understand the feeling of lack of sense of belonging that most Irish female emigrants experienced when they left Ireland. These women felt alienated not only from Ireland but also from their new land. Therefore, they felt that they did not belong anywhere. This is what Gilroy (Gilroy 2005, quoted in Cleary & Connolly 2005: 119) calls a 'third space'. Gilroy's study (Gilroy 2005, quoted in Cleary & Connolly

2005: 119) “The Black Atlantic” suggests that:

Diaspora provides a ‘third space’, or alternate public sphere, which allows for both identification outside, and permanent living inside, the national time-space. This ‘post-modern version of Diaspora emphasises that what distinguishes a diasporic community is its sense of being a ‘people’ with historical roots and destinies outside the time-space of the ‘host’ nation.

In the three literary objects of study we can see women that have their roots in Ireland and they see new things in their destinations, they find a different world in Australia and America. However, this change of time- space makes them wonder their identity until they feel alienated from both spaces.

Despite the fact that these three novels deal with different contexts, all of them have in common hard events in Ireland that led people to emigrate to America or Australia. Additionally, all these novels show the situation of women in different periods of Irish history, where the Catholic Church, and patriarchal society among other factors strongly determine women’s lives. All these women have in common a situation of opportunity but fear at the same time because they do not know what they will find abroad. All of them have that feeling of lack of identity, ‘otherness’ not only abroad but also a feeling of ‘otherness’ to their own country, alienation, and of course, a feeling of belonging. So, the main questions addressed by all these exile Irish girls are; where do we belong to? Where is home?

This is a problem of acceptance in the country of destination and even in their own country. The situation of the girls in Evelyn Conlon’s novel is one of very young and innocent girls between 14 and 18 years old, seen as ignorant by the British who send them to Australia to make them mainly domestic servants and to increase the population of Australia by bringing children into the country of destination. With respect to the language, most of them are depicted as women who did not speak proper English but Gaelic, so they are also seen as ignorant in terms of language. However, in Conlon’s novel I can find a wide variety of personalities in the different girls as individuals. Thus, I will also focus on their individual experiences.

It is a complex matter to determine if these girls have actually a choice to abandon their country because as it will be later examined, if the girls had stayed in Ireland they would have probably died. Consequently, it can be interpreted that they have no choice to stay in their country. Returning briefly to the subject of Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, the situation of Angela is one of continuous disgraces after Angela and her family returned to Ireland from America. Despite the difficulties, such as the death of three of her children and his alcoholic husband, Angela is depicted as a fighter who does not stop to think how much unfortunate she is, and avoids all kinds of pity. However, she faces all those difficulties with no rest in order to give her children the best in such circumstances. Thus, Frank McCourt describes his mother as an individual who always esteems her children and their well-being above all things, even if the price is selling her own body and her reputation. As regards Eilis Lacey in Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009), here the reader finds a young girl, who lives the 1950's Ireland where there are not opportunities for an unexperienced girl with no studies as Eilis, so her elder sister gives her the opportunity to find a better life in America. Eilis is not sure if she actually desires and deserves that chance and prefers to give this opportunity to her older sister Rose due to Rose's work position, studies, and admiration. Nevertheless, after Eilis is encouraged to go to America she arrives in a completely unfamiliar land where she finds an Irish community but at the same time she has a huge feeling of alienation, isolation and desolation. However, all the women in these three novels have a common state of affairs; as time goes by in their destination they seem to find their place in their new land. Consequently, as discussed above, these women start to awake a feeling of 'belonging', 'otherness', identity in some cases, and the ones who go back to Ireland feel even a sort of estrangement in Ireland.

As described in the previous pages, although this paper deals with different periods in Ireland, all these girls in the novels have in common the fact that they have the chance, and in some cases the obligation to emigrate with the hope to find a better life than the one they could expect in Ireland from the Great Famine of 1840's to the next century in the 50's.

2. Objectives and work structure

The general objective that I pursue in this dissertation is to demonstrate female Irish Diaspora as an effect of social issues suffered by Irish women such as sexual oppression and oppression of female domestic labours in different periods of the history of Ireland from the Great Famine onwards. For this purpose, I must fulfil the following specific objectives:

- Support the idea of lack of opportunities for women in Ireland throughout time. This objective will be attained in the methodology on page 17 as well as in point 4 on page 21 where it will be showed Irish women in the Great Famine and Irish female Diaspora. It will be also developed in the individual analysis of the three novels in the points 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 from page 23 to page 37.
- Clarify concepts of Diaspora, identity, 'Irishness', and patriarchy. Identity, 'Irishness', and patriarchy will be seen throughout the methodology and in points 4, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 from page 23 to page 37. However, it was necessary to explain the term Diaspora in the introduction in point 1 on page 7. A deeper analysis of Diaspora in the different novels will be seen in points 4, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.
- Clarify the different historical contexts and the power of the Catholic Irish Church over women. This objective will be fulfilled in the methodology from page 17 to page 20 as well as in the individual analysis of the three novels in the points 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.
- Analyse the role of women in different periods of the Irish history through three contemporary Irish novels. The roles of these women will be studied especially in points 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 as well as in the general conclusion in point 5 from page 39 to page 40.
- Examine the different contemporary novels as a tribute to Irish women emigrated to Australia and America. As well as in the previous objective, the last objective will be observed in points 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 as well and in the general conclusion in point 5.

First, it is crucial to write a brief historical introduction about the Great Famine and to connect it with the effects of the Great Famine that are shown in contemporary Irish literature. These representations will be portrayed through the discussion of the three different Irish literary works mentioned above; Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996), which is based in the author's tough life and his poor Irish family who are naturally from Ireland but whose children are born in Brooklyn and they have to emigrate to Limerick looking for a better life in 1930's. But life in Limerick is even worst. Since then, Irish communities are created over the world. Here it interesting to mention the topic of Irish communities or neighbourhoods created in Brooklyn as a result of the emigration, and it can be linked with Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009) in which a lot of Irish people living in America can be found, and *Angela's Ashes* (1996) in which the main characters emigrated to America to find a better life. In *Brooklyn* (2009) by Colm Tóibín, it is also interesting the topic of Irish communities in Brooklyn still present in 1950's. Eilis Lacey is an Irish girl who is encouraged to emigrate in order to find a better life in America because life for women seems to be easier in America. In point 4.3, it will be analysed the different life opportunities of women who stay in Ireland, such as Rose, Eilis' sister and Nancy, Eilis' best friend, and the opportunities of Eilis and other Irish girls who emigrate to America. On the other hand, Evelyn Conlon's *Not the Same Sky* (2013), that will be seen in point 4.1, gives the reader a different vision in which a huge number of Irish girls are forced to emigrate to Australia by different ships during the Great Famine, some orphans and some convicts, that can be seen as refugees or slave girls and who were made women of Australia. In Evelyn Conlon's novel there is also this topic of women who do not have the chance to leave Ireland in search of better opportunities during the Irish Great Famine. These two different visions of emigrant women will be analyzed as well as the life opportunities of women who stayed in Ireland, and the ideas of 'belonging', identity and 'alienation' will be crucial in this analysis.

Having discussed the circumstances of the women who abandoned Ireland to become women of other continents, I will analyse briefly the situation of women in the novels that do not have the opportunity or the necessity to emigrate in order to find a better life in another country finding evidence in historical sources. In Colm Tóibín's novel I will focus on Eilis' sister, Eilis' mother and Eilis' best friend. In Evelyn Conlon's novel I will analyse the situation of women whose desire is to escape from Ireland, but do not have the chance because of their age among other factors. In the case of Frank McCourt's novel,

the character of Angela will be discussed as a character who immigrates to America but has to return to her country. Therefore, the opportunities that these women find in the new land in contrast with the opportunities that they could have found in their own country will be discussed.

Beside this, I would like to do a tribute to the history of Ireland and the women who had to deal with these issues of the Great Famine and emigration throughout history through three brilliant Irish authors. So far, this chapter has focused on introducing the objectives and the structure of my final year dissertation, the objectives will be followed by a brief explanation of the methodology that I will apply, which will be based mainly on a feminist perspective of the contemporary novels that I am discussing. So, it will be necessary to focus on a historical context where I will discuss Catholicism, 'Irishness' and patriarchy in Ireland and apply this to Irish contemporary literature. Later, I will offer a historical context focusing on women experiences as a result of the Great Famine and Irish female Diaspora, and in the following chapters I will deal with more particular issues in terms of literature, such as: Great Famine and Irish Diaspora in the figure of Angela in Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996), Identity and the 'Otherness' in Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009) and women experiences in Australia in Evelyn Conlon's *Not the Same Sky* (2013). Regarding the authors, I will analyze memorial to Irish women in the three novels. Finally, will offer some conclusions and the bibliography.

3. Methodology

I shall apply the feminist method by relying on the feminist theory. I will apply this method to the study of three contemporary Irish novels in order to discuss female Irish Diaspora and the constraints suffered by Irish women throughout history. Regarding feminist theory Disch and Hawkesworth claim: “Feminist theories arise in conjunction with feminist activism and academic practices, seeking to illuminate the barriers and constraints that circumscribe women’s lives, explain their dynamics and persistence, and identify mechanisms for change” (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2016: 2).

Thus, feminist scholars fight against the patriarchal society, which according to Grant is “a political system of male domination [...] Patriarchy was conceptualized as an invisible but all pervasive, political and socially constructed system of male and masculinist domination” (Grant 2016, quoted in Disch & Hawkesworth, 2016: 229).

In order to fight against such a patriarchal society, different feminist waves were born. Here, it would be interesting to mention the Second- wave feminism. Feminism claims equality for both sexes. However, early Second- wave feminism was a feminism of two forms. The first began in 1960’s in an attempt to stop the differences that could justify discrimination in the field of sex. The second one, which was more radical, think that both men and women have been radicalized by capitalism and, especially by patriarchy. However, both groups of activists fight for the equality of the sexes. These feminist women claimed that they deserved to be equal with men because they possessed the same capabilities (Evans, 1995:14).

I will support my ideas with historical sources and other faithful essays written by scholars and critics including the ambitions of the Second-wave feminists using the mentioned method above. First, it is extremely necessary to clarify a series of theoretical, cultural and historical concepts in order to introduce the reader to Irish patriarchal society in different periods of the history of Ireland.

Prior to undertaking the investigation, it is crucial to clarify some terms to see the

importance of Catholicism, 'Irishness'¹, or identity and patriarchy in Frank McCourt's, Colb Tóibín's and Evelyn Conlon's novel. When talking about religion, it is important to underline the extent of its influence in Irish people's lives throughout history, especially marking gender boundaries and empowering men. Irish society has always been dominated by religion, not only Catholic religion mainly in the Republic of Ireland, but also Protestantism in the North of Ireland. (Inglis 2005, quoted in Cleary & Connolly 2005:59). Nevertheless, as the commented novels set mainly in the Republic of Ireland, I will focus principally on the power of Catholicism. As Inglis (Inglis 2005, quoted in Cleary & Connolly 2005:59) argues:

Being Catholic or Protestant has been fundamental to what Irish people have done and said over the past two hundred years. It has been central to family life, education, health care and social welfare and has influenced the schools people attended, the friends they had and who they married.

It is crucial to know the origin of the huge power of the Irish Church as a creator of patriarchy and sexual oppression. Constanza del Rio argues that the Irish "sexual discourse was originated in the second half of the nineteenth century resulting from the cooperation of the tenant farmers as a class and the Catholic Church" (Del Rio, 1996:209). Del Rio (1996:209) adds that:

After the Great Famine of 1845-9, the farmers started to promote certain social practices in order to prevent fragmentation of the family holding. These practices have been termed "familism" and its purpose was to enable the father to select his heir amongst his sons and to pass on the farm during his lifetime [...] Familism brought about changes in social behaviour, the most relevant being the widespread practice of matchmaking, the endorsement of strict chastity outside marriage and pressure of superfluous sons and daughters to emigrate.

As it can be seen, the empowerment of Catholic Church and patriarchy in Ireland started as a struggle between tenants and landlords in rural life causing the regulation of sexuality.

¹ The term 'Irishness' refers to Irish national identity, history and culture.

Despite the fact that feminist activists fought against patriarchy, in Ireland the role of women was in the private sphere of the house raising children, doing the chores of the house and even taking care of the husband and pleasing him, while men had nothing to do with the private sphere because they were able to work and socialise in the public sphere. It can be illustrated with the three novels commented in this final year dissertation: in *Angela's Ashes*, Angela is the one who is in the private sphere of the house taking care of her children, while his husband goes to work outside the house to earn some money that later he wastes in pints socialising with other men. The patriarchal ideology of Angela's husband can be proved with the following quotation from the novel: "Dad says a factory is no place for a woman" (McCourt, 1996: 248).

However, Angela seems to be a character that is more than used to deal with his husband's laziness and alcoholism; she answers in a rebel manner because the most important thing to her is her children's well-being: "Mam says, Sitting in your arse by the fire is no place for a man" (McCourt, 1996: 248).

Thus, connections exist between Catholicism, patriarchy and Irish identity because as it is illustrated in the previous quotations, women were wanted for domestic purposes. In the Irish society, it was crucial to be a good example of Irish Catholic individual in order to be accepted in the Irish community for having a moral behaviour and showing one's 'Irishness'. It cannot be forgotten that William of Orange, King of England, Ireland and Scotland from 1689 to 1702, strengthened the ties between Catholicism and Irish nationalism, or what is the same, 'Irishness'. In the 18th century William of Orange Penal Laws deprived Irish people of all political rights, turning the Catholic Church into the major representative of the Irish nation" (Del Rio, 1996:209). As Del Rio (1996:209) points out:

It should be remembered that the Irish Catholic Church managed, throughout history, to maintain and strengthen its bond with the people, and that the introduction of the Penal Laws with William of Orange at the beginning of the eighteen century, which deprived the Catholic population of political rights, transformed the Church into the only

representative organization, and thus, focus of
identification, of the majority of the Irish people. [...]

From this point onwards, Catholicism is the central power in the Republic of Ireland. The Catholic Church was engaged in politics, and it is a way to oppress the female gender and empower the male one turning Ireland into a patriarchal society as well as a misogynistic country (Del Rio, 1996: 209).

4. Irish Women in the Great Famine and Irish female Diaspora

In this section, I will provide the reader with the historical context in which The Great Famine took place and the effects that the Famine had, particularly in women's lives. Then, I will include in this section three more chapters dealing with the female characters of the three novels commented in this final year dissertation. The Great Irish Famine of 1845-1852 marked the most important historical event in Ireland in the modern period (Whelan 2002, quoted in Cleary & Connolly 2005:137). The Great Famine of Ireland made a great change in different fields, such as: demography due to the fact that "over 1 million people died and 2 million more emigrated within a decade" (Whelan 2002, quoted in Cleary & Connolly 2005:137). It also affected economics, society and culture. The Great Famine was caused by a mysterious fungus called *Phytophthora Infestans* which, as an effect infected the potato harvest causing later the fall of the crop (Lysaght, 1996: 63). As the potato was the main diet for half of the population it is also known as the Potato Famine.

In *Not the Same Sky* (2013), we find the topic of women in charge of the house as well as the topic of starvation. *Not the Same Sky* (2013) is the only novel here studied that actually deals with the Great Famine and the migration as an effect of the Great Famine. In Conlon's novel, in particular, the circumstances of Irish women are very well illustrated through four main characters: Honora Raftery, Anne Sherry, Julia Cuffe and Bridget Joyce. For an analysis of this work, see (Terrazas 2017, quoted in Zamorano & Gray, 2017: 55). The main purpose of Irish patriarchal society that sent those women to Australia was to take young women to Australia to make them getting married to Australian men in order to bear children and increase the Australian population (Terrazas 2017, quoted in Zamorano & Gray, 2017: 55). The British Government treated them as slaves.

Although it is important to know some theoretical notions of the Great Famine this dissertation focuses on the situation of women during Great Famine as well as female Irish Diaspora. A study by Lysaght has found that:

In accordance with the gender division of labour in Irish rural society the production and provision of food was essentially the task of the man of the

house while the woman of the house was largely concerned with the management the food supply (Lysaght, 1996: 77).

In *Angela's Ashes* (1996), Malachy, Angela's husband is the one in charge of working outside the house in order to bring money to the house while Angela is the one who splits the food for the whole family. This story is hard in terms of family relationships because although Malachy immigrates to England in search of a job, Angela and her children do not receive any money from him to survive. This miserable life makes Angela beg for food and new shoes for their poor children. It also leads Angela to sell her body due to the fact that they do not have a shelter to sleep. It is a way to survive in order to protect her children and to make them have a better childhood within that miserable Irish childhood. This illustration provides evidence of Angela's survival instinct and that it is only thanks to this mother how Frank and his two brothers go ahead. In fact, Lysaght (1996: 77) says about Irish women's situation:

This involved preserving and preparing food, and dividing it among the various members of the family in accordance with their requirements, a circumstance that also raises the question of women's influence on the incidence of survival or morality in families during the family.

The Catholic Church has a major role in the life of Irish women during the Great Famine and in later periods. The subordination of women towards men and towards the Catholic Church can be very well illustrated with Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996) due to the fact that in McCourt's novel Catholicism is prominent, and although men commit sins it seems that it is easier for women to be punished by the Church and be "sent to hell". When Frank has sexual relations for the first time with Theresa Carmody he is worried about sending her to hell, he says: "Theresa is a torment to me [...] There he is, there's Frankie McCourt, the dirty thing that sent Theresa Carmody to hell" (Mccourt, 1996:386).

So, it illustrates that Catholicism gives a different treatment to men and women and uses different strategies to have both groups on its power. In addition, throughout the novel, Angela's family reproaches her to be married with a man from the North who is not Catholic but Protestant: "You have nobody to blame but yourself for getting' into trouble with a drunkard from the North, a man that doesn't even look like a Catholic, him

with his odd manner” (McCourt, 1996:10). Thus, it can be seen here boundaries between people as an effect of religion and that Angela is blamed and tormented for falling in love with a Protestant man as if she had committed a crime.

Although Colm Tóibín’s *Brooklyn* (2009) sets in 1950’s, which is a period even farther from the Great Famine, it also presents the Diaspora effect of miserable life in Ireland and a search of better opportunities. However, all these women who move to the United States or Australia in the three different novels find the liberation of some social issues and especially the opportunity to survive.

4.1. Women experiences in Australia in Evelyn Conlon's *Not the Same Sky*

It was already seen in this dissertation that The Irish Great Famine of 1845-1849 was one of the main reasons for the Diaspora and it was also mentioned that Irish women have emigrated in great numbers since the 19th century. In Conlon’s *Not The Same Sky* (2013), Conlon tells the fictional story of four characters; Honora Raftery, Bridget Joyce, Anne Sherry, and Julia Cuffe in order to illustrate the real historical event that took place during the Irish Great Famine in which over 4,000 Irish girls between 14 and 20 years old were shipped to Australia mainly to work as domestic servants and bear children. It is also important to consider the male character of Charles Strutt who is the surgeon-Superintendent who does not only go with the girls during their journey to Australia but also worries about them and tries to help the girls to find their place in their new land. Although some girls did not want to abandon Ireland, these women that were shipped to the Hyde Park Barrack in Sydney, were convicts in Australia who actually had no choice. Leaving Ireland was actually an opportunity for them to survive in a time when the Potato Famine was killing over a million people.

Once the base of the novel has been exposed, it is important to take into account that the experiences of these women can be analysed as the experience of the girls as a group and the individual experiences of each girl. Regarding their experience as a group, the Great Famine is not the only factor to ship these girls to Australia, but also a patriarchal factor. The fact that these women are shipped to Australia mainly because they are women and can serve as maids and mothers in Australia is very well illustrated in the following

quotation in which two MPs discuss about the orphans:

“- Is it not a dangerous precedent to pick up orphan girls in their vulnerable state [...] simply because we need domestic servants?”

“- Females to bear children, don’t forget that. And wouldn’t it be a better place for them to do that?” (Conlon, 2013: 12)

This quote shows the ethics of the patriarchal society that the second- wave feminists fought against and that were suffered in Australia by over 4,000 Irish convicts. It is therefore likely that the Irish girls shipped to Australia did not have choice in terms of staying in their country or becoming women of Australia because going abroad was to escape not only from Famine but also from the repression of the Irish Catholic church values. To illustrate this statement, it is significant when the characters of Charles and Julia Cuffe are discussing whether she is required anywhere in Australia or not; he says: “But you had a choice. You all had a choice, well you could have said no, I think...” (Conlon, 2013:118), and Julia answers:” Some choice” (Conlon, 2013:118). Thus, Charles himself is aware of the fact that these girls had actually no choice because if they had decided to stay in Ireland it could mean die from starvation. So, as Julia says they only had “some choice”.

Ironically, not only Honora, Bridget, Julia and Anne, the characters in Conlon's novel but also more than 4,000 Irish girls that seemed to escape from Irish Catholic repression were actually going to serve as mothers and servants in the private sphere of the house. This important notion of motherhood in Irish culture in relation to a sense of national identity can be linked with the notion of “Mother Ireland”. This myth of Ireland as a mother can be seen in some literary works and Irish mythological figures such as: Roisin Dubh, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, Mother Eire, and many others where Ireland is personified as a woman whose name is Mother (Clarke, 1: 2013). Professor Clarke (Clarke, 1: 2013) says: “In the years preceding the Independence, this view of Mother Ireland in need of protection became a hallmark of nationalism but also one requiring male intervention to fully establish her rights as a Sovereign Power”. Commenting on the term “Mother Ireland”, Clarke (Clarke, 1: 2013) also argues:

Some commentators have argued that Ireland depicted as a Mother has

been effective that it is entrenched in the idea of woman in stereotypical roles and created a state structure and culture in Ireland whereby men occupy the political role of fighting for the rights of Ireland and as such on women's behalf.

Thus, this statement illustrates that a woman has not the qualities to rule a country, and it is the man who has to protect the country identifying the country with a mother who needs male protection. In addition, Irish national identity emphasises the necessity of a male politician in order to rule and fix a nation. Stereotypes of gender, which establish that men are more clever and stronger than women, are strengthened identifying Ireland and women with weakness because they need a man to be cared.

One of the aims of the author may be to criticize not only patriarchal aspects but also political aspects, the power of the British Government on these girls. As Terrazas (2017:60) states:

The following question is an example of the narrator's use of Lyne's rhetoric of inquiry as critical practice: 'What could they say to what they didn't know?' Conlon's rhetoric of inquiry [...] adopts a 'subversive attitude to criticise British social institutions and practices [...].

Thus, as a group the girls do not know where they are being shipped by the British Government. The orphans do not know what they will find in their destination. Thus, all of them have common feelings of fear, and different worries. Furthermore, they are treated as ignorant because most of them do not speak proper English. The novel says: "According to him they were useless, stupid, ignorant, and unmanageable" (Conlon, 2013: 46). A huge hostility towards the orphans can be seen from British men. So, it is only Strutt the one who worries about the girls' well-being and tries to educate them.

The experience of these girls as a group is one of degradation; they are treated as inferior and as if they were items that can be refunded. It can be illustrated with the following quotation: "The judge dealt with these in a disdainful fashion, showing little sympathy for the girls, but then bellowed at a Mr. Arbuckle who was delivering back, with complaint, the girl who was working for him" (Conlon, 2013: 115). Eamon de Valera's

forty-one article can be also applied to an extract from Evelyn Conlon's *Not The Same Sky* (2013) in a conversation dealing with the orphan girls:

- “It is not a dangerous precedent to pick up orphan girls in their vulnerable state, unable to put up a fight, and ship them to our colony simply because we need domestic servants?”
- “Females to bear children, don’t forget that. And wouldn’t it be a better place for them to do that?” (Conlon, 2013: 12).

However, these girls face their individual experiences in different ways. All of them are alienated not only from their land but also from their new land because the British Government tries to make them forget their past in Ireland but they are treated as inferior in Australia only because they are immigrant women. But it is necessary to highlight the fact that after some years most of them get use to Australia and they feel themselves Australian women. However, Bridget is the one that cannot stand the hard situation of being away from her home. So, it makes her become mentally insane, which makes her fantasise about a bird that may symbolize migration as a way to survive and Bridget’s desire of freedom to go home. Bridget could not adapt to her new life, so she died so soon. Honora is the one that adapts better to the commitment of bearing a mother of Australia. She gets married, has children and is well educated in the sense that she becomes a literate woman which is well seen in her letters. In addition, Honora shows in her letter that she prefers forgetting her past and she does not say a word about this to her children: “My daughters and Teresa’s daughters sat together in class and knew nothing about their mothers. They might not have believed me. And I wanted my children to believe me” (Conlon, 2013: 204). Honora finally creates a new identity, an Australian one and finds that her place is in Australia.

Anne also represents good adaptation to the new land. Although she does not get married, she finally makes her own hat business and finds her place there as a woman of Australia. The fact that she does not get married can represent female empowerment at that time because when the girls were shipped to Australia their main commitment was to bear children there.

Regarding Julia, she is the one that better represents female empowerment from the

very beginning. As the other girls during the journey to Australia, Julia is confused and has the same fears as the other girls. However, she rebels against the authorities and refuses to go away from Ireland to be a domestic servant in Australia. Nevertheless, Julia also seems to find her place in Australia and we can see a huge identity confusion in her; the dancer Lola Montez asks her if she is the Irish girl, Julia says: “Yes, I said, although I don’t know what that means anymore. How can I be from Ireland if I’m not there?” (Conlon, 2013: 217). Thus, Julia finds her place in Australia because she moves to the south of Australia with the dream of becoming a dancer, but she is not sure about her identity because she does not feel an Irish girl owing to the fact that she has been alienated from there but she seems not to feel Australia her home.

In this traumatic experience, Conlon shows the internal evolution of all these orphan girls, and in which ways it affects individually to them but also the bonds that the experience creates as a group. It seems that Evelyn Conlon wrote this book with the aim of paying tribute to all the orphans that were shipped to Australia in order to be domestic servants. Conlon seems to be very concerned about the immoral treatment that over 4,000 girls suffered in Australia only because they were fragile women. She shows the reader the great power of patriarchy and Catholic Church, which used women only to bear children and doing the chores. Somehow, the author also remembers the reader that this story really happened and it cannot be forgotten. Terrazas (2017:60) says:

Joy’s rhetoric of inquiry around the erection of the memorial of the girls reveals the importance of understanding the roots of this Irish Diaspora in Australia in order to pay tribute to these orphans, to heal historical trauma.

Therefore, as a feminist, Conlon writes about female injustice and female empowerment. And she also writes about the importance of memorials in order to remember what should not be forgotten.

4.2. Great Famine and Irish Diaspora in the figure of Angela in Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*

As McCourt’s novel takes place in Ireland approximately 85 years after the Irish Potato Famine, little is known about the relation between Great Famine and the figure of Angela

in Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996). However, the author intends to clarify the connection between the Great Famine, the Irish Diaspora and the figure of Angela. Angela is a Limerick woman who shows the strength of a poor mother in the 30's, who saves some of his sons from death by suffering, begging and selling her own body because of the hunger and hard situation.

Although McCourt's story happens in 1930's and the Irish Famine was in 1840's, in several occasions, Frank refers to the Irish Great Famine and, consequently the English, as the cause of their starvation at that moment. Frank continually blames the Great Famine for the starvation that her family is facing in Limerick; he says about Paddy Clohessy, one of his classmates: "He's a skeleton with rags and if they were making a film about the Famine he'd surely be put in the middle of it" (Mccourt, 1996: 133). Thus, Frank compares his situation of starvation with the one that took place during the Great Famine. As it was seen in another chapter of this dissertation, Angela's situation can be compared to the situation of women in the Great Famine that were in charge of splitting the food at home and feeding the family in a fair way depending on every member's necessities. However, husbands had to work outside the house in order to bring money to their family and supply them with food.

Nevertheless, Angela's situation is a hardest one because Malachy wastes all his wage and the money that the Government gives to them in alcohol, and it is usually Angela the one that has to play both roles of providing their family with food by begging and asking the shop assistant for a later payment leaving money to owe, and dividing it among the members of her family. Frank narrates one of these experiences in the following extract of the book:

Dad is out looking for a job again and sometimes he comes home with the smell of whiskey, singing all the songs about suffering Ireland. Mam gets angry and says Ireland can kiss her arse. He says that's nice language to be using in front of the children and she says never mind the language, food on the table is what she wants, not suffering Ireland (Mccourt, 1996: 15).

There is another episode in which Angela sends her children to look for his father in all

the pubs of the city. It shows that she does not mind embarrass her husband in front of everyone because the most important thing is to avoid him from drinking all the money that they need to feed their children; Angela says:

I want ye to go back down to that pub and read him out of it. I want ye to stand in the middle of the pub and tell every man your father is drinking the money for the baby. Ye are to tell the world there isn't a scrap of food in this house, not a lump of coal to start the fire, not a drop of milk for the baby's bottle (McCourt, 1996: 207).

I would dare to talk about Angela as a heroine, the heroine in Frank McCourt's novel as well as in his life and his brother's life. But it is important first to clarify Angela's background before returning to her homeland in order to understand her situation and experiences.

In the 1930's, Angela is a woman from Limerick who comes from a Catholic family that got married to a protestant man from the North of Ireland, their different religion beliefs make Angela be reproached by her family the fact that she married with a protestant man from the North of Ireland and they defend that all her problems come from her choice when marrying him. The novel tells how this couple immigrated to America in search of a better life, in search of a job, and probably escaping from the reproaches that both of them could receive in Ireland for having married someone from different religious beliefs due to the fact that for them it was a huge disgrace. It can be illustrated with the following quotation: "Angela wanted to give him a middle name, Munchin, after the patron saint of Limerick but Malachy said over his dead body. No son of his would have a Limerick name" (McCourt, 1996: 9). It can be also perceived when Malachy is insulted by Delia: "Your son's christening day and you have to go drinking. Delia told him he was a disgusting specimen but what could you expect from the North of Ireland (McCourt, 1996: 10).

As a result, there is a clear border between the two Irelands and its people. However, Angela and Malachy immigrated to America in search of better opportunities where they had Frankie, the narrator of the story, and some of his brother. Nevertheless, Angela and

her family had to return to Ireland when the Great Depression² started in the United States of America. They go to Limerick having in mind that they could have the support of Angela's family. But what Angela finds in the miserable life of Limerick is not much better. As it was illustrated before with some examples from the novel, in her arrival to Ireland, Angela only finds reproaches from her family for having married with a man from the North of Ireland. Angela's husband is neither a support for her. He is an alcoholic who does not bring money to the house even when their children are starving and dying, so he always ends up being fired from all his jobs. However, as soon as his husband finds a job and promises her he would change, she believes and is encouraged again to forgive his husband and to trust him. Frank narrates:

When Dad gets a job Mam is cheerful and she sings,
Anyone can see why I wanted your kiss,
It had to be and the reason is this
Could it be true, someone like you
Could love me, love me? (McCourt, 1996:15)

And he adds:

When Dad brings home the first week's wages Mam is delighted she can pay the lovely Italian man in the grocery shop and she can hold her head up again because there's nothing worse in the world than to owe and to be beholden anyone (McCourt, 1996: 15)

Angela is an innocent woman who suffers a development throughout the novel in terms of trusting her husband. During all the novel it is seen that Angela is the character who feeds her children and maintains the family by letting the shop unpaid until she is able to pay. As the novel progresses, we see Angela losing her hope in his husband, who is working in England but does not send money or news, and she sees herself forced to beg in the church. Despite the fact that Angela's family suffer from an increasing poverty, Frank shows the reader Angela's kindness towards her equals. It can be illustrated with the following extract from the book:

² The Great Depression refers to the greatest economic crisis that began in the United States of America in 1929 after the market crash.

You never know when you might come home and find Mam sitting by the fire with a woman and child, strangers. Always a woman and child. Mam finds them wandering the streets and if they ask, Can you spare a few pennies, miss? Her heart breaks. She never has money so she invites them home for tea and a bit of fried bread and if it's a bad night she'll let them sleep by the fire in a pile of rags in the corner. The bread she gives them always means less for us and if we complain she says there are always people worse off and we can surely spare a little from what we have (McCourt, 1996:317).

She is a heroine in the sense that she does not only fight for her children alone in order to stop their starvation but also helps others that are in the same or even worse situation.

Angela illustrates female empowerment because she has to deal with the suffering of seeing some of her children dying and practically saving the life of the others. *Angela's Ashes* portrays that it was quite usual for men to spend most of their time in pubs while their wives took care of the children or did the chores. Angela deals with her husband's alcoholism problem and is capable of looking for her husbands in all the pubs of Limerick to take him home. Furthermore, in 1930's it was not usual for an Irish woman to grow their children alone, as if she was single, however Angela does it because her husband abandons them and does not give her money to feed and dress their children. In this novel, Diaspora can be seen in the character of Frank McCourt because her mother does not have the opportunity to go back to The United States in search of a better life. While Francis is able to earn some money to go abroad, her mother Angela has more children and lots of responsibilities in Ireland. Furthermore, she has not the opportunity to earn money mainly because she is a woman, an Irish mother abandoned by her husband. Thus, patriarchy is very well illustrated in *Angela's Ashes*.

It can be supported the idea of this novel as a tribute to the memory of Angela as a courage mother. The novel seems to be not only a memoir of the author but also a tribute to his mother, mainly because the title *Angela's Ashes* bears her name. The title can be a very debatable topic because the reader may think: what *ashes* does Frank McCourt refer to?

When the reader first reads the title, he/she may think that the title refers to Angela's death. However, it is quite curious the fact that Angela is one of the few characters that survives in the novel. Frank narrates at several stages of the novel how his mother stares into the ashes. He says: "He laughs and Mam stares into the dead ashes in the fireplace" (McCourt, 1996: 332).

It is highly probable that the title *Angela's Ashes* makes reference to the fact that Angela has seen some of her children die, and the memory that Frank has of his mother is one of a sad woman staring into the dead ashes. Nevertheless, as it is clearly seen throughout the novel and in many interviews given to McCourt, the author remembers his mother as a courage woman, a heroine that had to deal with the miserable life of an Irish mother who has to grow their children up alone in 1930. Angela shows strength and female empowerment in a historical context where it was so hard to be an independent woman. Angela leaves the embarrassment apart in order to save their children from starvation. She is capable of becoming a beggar for her children, she even sells her body to give their children a place to sleep. For all these reasons mentioned in this dissertation and narrated in the novel, Frank McCourt not only narrates his memoir in Ireland, he also pays tribute to his mother Angela. This novel seems to be a way of thanking his mother for having faced all those daily hardships narrated above in order to save her children's lives. *Angela's Ashes* are the good deeds that Angela left in this world, her ashes so to speak. Such deeds are now illustrated in Frank McCourt's novel to pay tribute to the memory of his mother.

4.3. Identity and the ‘Otherness’ in Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn*

Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009) narrates the story of Eilis Lacey, a girl who leaves Ireland behind in 1950's to start a new life in America. In Tóibín's novel, Eilis' evolution is very well illustrated through her feelings and experiences. In the story, it is highlighted the fact that women in Ireland only had one destiny and ambition; to get married with a good man, bring children and work in the private sphere of the house. When Eilis is about to leave Ireland, the narrator says: "Eilis had always presumed that she would live in the town all her life, as her mother had done [...] She had expected that she would find a job in the town, and then marry someone and give up the job and have children" (Tóibín, 2009: 27). This situation is exemplified with Nancy's situation, Eilis' best friend. During the novel, Eilis' best friend's ambition is to find a boy with a good business future in order to marry him and start a life as mother and housewife. Thus, according to Cohen's study, Eilis' migration to America is a labour migration in order to success in her career (Cohen 2005, quoted in Connolly 2005: 109).

Thus, patriarchy in Ireland can be observed in 1950's because once more women are seen as beings whose main commitment and use is to bear children and work in the house. However, when Eilis moves to America, she discovers a new world where the range of life opportunities is widely open.

Irish Diaspora and female migration to America are highlighted during Eilis' journey to America, where the reader discovers that there are plenty of Irish girls leaving Ireland to find a better life in America, and in Eilis' accommodation where there are other Irish girls completely alienated from their past in Ireland, with other ambitions, and self-confidence. Nevertheless, when Eilis arrives to America, she feels not to be in her place; she feels she is needed in Ireland where her not very healthy mother and elder sister are. Eilis' emotions are described as ones of fear and homesick during the first months in America. At the beginning Eilis' feeling is that the letters from Ireland are too slow in coming; she cannot stand the situation away from her home in Ireland: "She was nobody here. It was not just that she had no friends and family; it was rather that she was a ghost in this room, on the streets on the way to work" (Tóibín, 2009: 56). So, Eilis feels that she does not belong to that place. It could be said that her home is where her family is, where her heart is so to

speak.

Nevertheless, along the story Eilis evolution is narrated. When Eilis meets Tony, an Italian- American boy who falls in love with her, she starts to find her place in America. She is introduced to Tony's family, who make her feel comfortable and at home. At this point, there is Eilis' question of identity. She wonders where she belongs to, and her heart is divided between Ireland and Brooklyn. The reader notices how gradually, Eilis starts to think less about Ireland and her family; she lives her own experiences and enjoys them. Eilis starts to make new memories of America to leave her past in Ireland behind. Eilis's fear and homesickness disappear progressively in the novel as long as she finds her place in America. In Brooklyn, she discovers a new world where she can progress in her professional life instead of staying stuck with the only ambition of getting married and bear children.

When Eilis first arrives to America she feels that America is not her place and that she should be in Ireland with her family; the narrator says: "She was nobody here. It was not just that she had not friends and family; it was rather that she was a ghost on this room, in the streets on the way to work, on the shop floor" (Tóibín, 2009: 67). Then, Father Flood, the Irish priest who helps Eilis with her accommodation and career in America, tells her that everybody who abandons Ireland has the same feeling of homesickness but it disappears soon; he says: "You're homesick, that's all. Everybody gets it. But it passes. In some it passes more quickly than in others. There's nothing harder than it [...]" (Tóibín, 2009: 75). When Eilis meets Tony, she starts to think less about home because she thinks more about Tony: "She had been keeping the thought of home out of her mind, letting it come to her only she wrote or received letters [...]" (Tóibín, 2009: 131). When Rose, Eilis' sister, dies there is a moment in which Eilis also thinks more about Tony than about her death sister: "It was as though Rose's death had happened long ago, and her night with Tony remained with her as something powerful, still present (Tóibín, 2009: 188). Finally, when Eilis feels the obligation to go back to Ireland with her mother, she decides to get married to Tony. Once she is at home in Ireland the narrator says about Eilis: "[...] she had longed so much for the familiarity of these rooms that she had presumed she would be happy and relieved to step back into them, but, instead, of this first morning, all she could do was count the days before she went back" (Tóibín, 2009: 205). In these quotations from the book, Eilis evolution is seen as a hard process of finding one's place.

As soon as she meets Tony, she starts to feel that she is in the right place, she feels America as her new place. Thus, it could be said that Eilis feels Tony and Tony's family as her own family, so she feels she has a place in America. However, it is curious the fact that when she spends some weeks in Ireland she feels that she has to go back to America by force and only because she is married to Tony. The narrator says:

She tried to think of Tony now as a loving and comforting presence, but she saw instead someone she was allied with whether she liked or not, someone who was, she thought, unlikely to allow her to forget the nature of the alliance and his need for her to return (Tóibín, 2009: 232).

This idea can be linked to Gilroy's study related to the third space of Irish emigrant women when they feel alienated in both spaces and confused about their identity (Gilroy 2005, quoted in Connolly 2005: 119).

Connected with the concept of marriage is the Catholic Church. Although in Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009) the representative of the Catholic church is father Flood, a priest who helped Eilis to make her trip to America possible and to be integrated with the Irish community in America, there are also situations in the novel where the reader can notice the power of the Church in relation with patriarchy; Eilis says: How easy would it be to divorce someone? [...] The only divorced people anyone in the town knew were Elizabeth Taylor and [...] other film stars" (Tóibín, 2009:218). Although Eilis is not thinking in divorcing Tony, as they get married too soon in their relationship and because of her woman condition a lot of doubts and insecurities come to her. Therefore, here we can see how a woman is marginalized is case she divorces while a man has not to be so much worried about being marginalized and isolated if he divorces. This statement can be also supported with the article forty-one in the 1937 constitution of the Irish Republic, drawn up by the president Eamon De Valera:

The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.

In particular the State recognises that by her life within the home,

woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that Mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded (Killfeather 2005, quoted in Cleary & Conolly 1995: 107)

Regarding 'otherness' in *Brooklyn* (2009), it is seen that Irish girls who move to America are alienated from their identity in order to look like American girls, or at least "less Irish". It is illustrated when Eilis is in her way to America and an Irish woman explains her how Eilis has to behave when she arrives to her destination:

- "Don't look too innocent,' she said. 'When I put some eyeliner on you and some rouge and mascara, they'll be afraid to stop you. Your suitcase is all wrong, but there's nothing we can do about that.'"

- "What's wrong with it?"

- "It's too Irish and they stop the Irish" (Tóibín ,2009: 49).

Hence, Irish girls in America are meant to pretend to be someone else. Curiously, as the novel progresses Eilis does not need to pretend, she seems to be less Irish, and acquires a more American identity. There is a point in the story in which Eilis is between getting married to Jim Farrell, an Irish boy with a good position in Eilis' town or going back to America with her husband Tony. Jim may represent Ireland, and the easy way for Eilis to stay with her mother in Ireland and have the ordinary life that an Irish girl could expect in the 50's. But then, she realises where her place is at that moment; she belongs to America, she belongs where her heart is.

Regarding this issue, Stoddard says: "Home points at rather than determines its referent. Thus, we may say that 'home is where the heart is' or home is where one's family is" (Stoddard, 2012: 156). Stoddard's statement could be applied to

Eilis' beginning in America, when she feels her home is in Ireland with her family. However, later she finds a family in America, Tony's family. And Tony represents Eilis' future. So, she leaves her past in Ireland behind to start a new life where her heart is at the end, in America.

As the other Irish girls in America, Eilis suffers a physical and psychological transformation in Brooklyn through her new experiences. It can be seen in her more modern physical appearance, as well as in her transformation into a self-confident woman.

Colm Tóibín seems to be concerned with female Irish migration to America, where an Irish community was created. He did not only write a love story, but a story about identity and how any Irish girl emigrated to America could have lived such experiences during their journey. He narrates the fears and questions of belonging of all those emigrant Irish girls illustrated in Eilis. But he also tells the reader about the ordinary destiny of those girls who stayed in Ireland. So, it could be said that the author pays tribute to Irish women who were so brave and fortunate to immigrate to America to find their home there.

5. Conclusion

This essay has shown that patriarchy in Ireland can be seen along different centuries, as it is demonstrated in the three novels which are the object of this dissertation. Although the plots take place in different periods of the history, all of them have a common characteristic; a patriarchal society where women are meant to do the housework and reproduce. Beside this, that lack of opportunities in Ireland leads them to emigrate to America or Australia in search of better opportunities. However, while the emigration to America in 1930 and 1950 was a journey that most of the girls decided voluntarily, during the Irish Great Famine in 1845-1849 most of the girls who were shipped to Australia did not choose leaving Ireland freely. So, Australia could be said to be a more forced destination because the orphans shipped to Australia did not have much choice; they were survivors in Australia that would have died from starvation in Ireland. Thus, when Eilis and Angela immigrate to America, they see their destination as the land of the dreams and opportunities, but when Honora, Julia, Anne and Bridget are shipped to Australia, they do not know where they go.

It has been seen that the three novels illustrate migration as a huge liberation from different kinds of social oppression such as: religious oppression, sexual oppression or the lack of opportunities to prosper in one's career. All these barriers that the girls have in Ireland are completely linked to patriarchy due to the fact that as it is proved in this dissertation, patriarchy is, somehow, a product of the Catholic Church that constrains women from living their sexuality freely. However, most of the characters in the discussed novels suffer an identity development in their destinations that leads them to feel free and self-confident. They start to quit those invisible chains that they had in Ireland and they build new memories in the new land in order to leave their past behind. As an example, the character of Eilis makes new memories in America that help her to avoid thinking in Ireland that much. The character of Honora also makes new memories in Australia, which makes her leave her life in Ireland behind.

On the other hand, these girls live traumatic experiences. Not that much in *Tóibín's Brooklyn* (2009) but in *Angela's Ashes* (1996), and especially in *Not the Same Sky* (2013). Thus, it is quite reasonable that they try to build new lives and treat the past as a topic that is better not to mention. *Not the Same Sky* (2013) shows those historical memories in

which Irish girls were forced to abandon their homes and families in Ireland forever in order to go to Australia, where they were mistreated and humiliated. In Conlon's novel, those experiences are traumatic memories that are preferable not to think about. Although they seem to forget their Irish roots and build new memories as women of Australia as it happens with the character of Honora, who does not tell her daughters anything about her past; most of the girls are not able to overcome that traumatic experience. So, the best solution for them was to forget, or at least, pretend that they have forgotten.

By paying tribute to all the Irish girls who had to leave Ireland throughout history, the authors not only show the reader the miserable conditions of women in Ireland but also give importance to the memorials and to the fact that what happened cannot be forgotten. They try to make us empathise with the characters and make us ask ourselves several questions: What if it had been my situation? What if I was Angela, Honora, Julia, Anne, Bridget or Eilis? Would I be as strong as them? Would I have survived? It is hard to answer because it causes a feeling of huge fear, homesick, and depression. Thus, I would highlight the importance of remembering these historical events and to spread them throughout centuries, there have been plenty of heroines involved in female Irish Diaspora.

It has been shown that Irish patriarchal society see women as human beings that have not the qualities to rule a country, and it is the man who has to protect the country identifying the country with a mother who needs male protection. Paradoxically, in the novels, the female characters are the ones who have to take care of everyone at home; both their children and their husbands. We have offered evidence that national identity or 'Irishness', Catholicism and patriarchy are completely connected among them. Catholicism had always power on Irish people encouraging them to follow norms of moral behaviour that provoked damage to women placing them in an inferior position.

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